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# Kansas' Problem of Delinquency

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THREE times every day nearly sixteen hundred inmates of the Kansas correctional institutions sit at table at state expense. Every night they are under guard in cells or dormitories. Sixteen hundred persons are to be clothed and over two hundred employees are paid salaries to see that they obey regulations restraining them from liberty. The inmates are distributed thus, the figures being given for the past five years:

| | Penitentiary | Reformatory | Boys' School | Girls' School | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| July 1, 1910.. | 890 | 347 | 252 | 199 | 1688 |
| July 1, 1911.. | 918 | 366 | 263 | 203 | 1750 |
| July 1, 1912.. | 909 | 338 | 245 | 179 | 1671 |
| July 1, 1913.. | 828 | 247 | 262 | 164 | 1501 |
| July 1, 1914.. | 793 | 240 | 252 | 153 | 1438 |
| July 1, 1915.. | 852 | 285 | 258 | 154 | 1549 |
| Oct. 1, 1915.. | 830 | 330 | 264 | 154 | 1578 |

These girls, boys, young men and mature men and women cost the state $450,000 every year, not to mention the loss through their removal from productive occupations nor the expense incurred in legal proceedings. There is some return in the productive labor performed—the twine mill and coal mine at the penitentiary, farming operations and minor industries at the other institutions—except for this they are a dead load charged to the taxpayers.

The popular idea is that the state's problem is to protect society and to visit punishment for deterrent effect on others, with such remaking of the inmates for good citizenship as may be possible. Actually, its first problem is how so to safeguard its rising generation that there shall be a decrease in the number of inmates; its second is how best to restore those now in custody to society; the other duties come after these.

A criminal career seldom breaks out suddenly. It is a growth. The boys and girls sent to our institutions rarely are there for first offenses. Mostly they have been bad boys and girls; the town marshal has reprimanded them; the probate judge has struggled with them, finally running with the "gang" they do something so inexcusable that they are sentenced. In a large number of cases there is, back of this, family trouble—the parents are dead or divorced, or one is dead and the other remarried. The child had no real home. Driven to the street, it learned the lessons of crime. Many of the young men have wandered over the country, tramping. They know more of the world's wickedness than many a man learns in all his life. Occasionally is one who has a good home but did not appreciate it. Sometimes a single misstep is so serious that conviction quickly follows. To these there is as much punishment in the first night in a cell as can be given in a year's hard labor in the mines.

*Kansas needs for the betterment of its correctional work:*

*Sanitary cell houses for penitentiary prisoners.*

*Separate barracks for diseased inmates.*

*Cottage system for trustworthy inmates.*

*All women delinquents at Beloit under board of women managers.*

*Expansion of trades education in all institutions.*

*Extension of parole system, especially for younger inmates.*

*Public defenders in counties.*

*State labor bureau to secure employment for paroled inmates.*

The girls have somewhat similar experience—broken families, neglect, battered around the world, victimized by human wolves, they often look upon the state's care as the only touch of kindness they remember in their lives.

Because of these conditions each inmate of the institutions for the younger generation inmates must be handled as an individual. No hard and fast rule can be laid down for discharge or parole. One 18-year-old boy with a good home, fine Christian parents, forged a small check and was sentenced to the Reformatory. The district judge wrote a letter a few days later asking that he be paroled. The boy was away from home; he claimed that his employer owed him for wages but would not pay him. He was desperately homesick and tried to get his money. The judge explained that he did not understand the story or he would have paroled him from the bench. It would have been cruelty to have refused the father who came to plead for his son and to have kept the boy for one or two years in the institution. In other cases young men have led such a life of recklessness that nothing but a long time of restraint can make them see the world in right perspective. The truth is that many inmates are better fed, wearing cleaner clothes, and are caring for their bodies more intelligently than in years. They have kept irregular hours, used cigarettes, drank and wasted their lives. One or two years of discipline may instill ideas of right living that will stay with them when they go out.

The statute allowing judges to parole from the bench results in much good. Our district judges as a whole use it with intelligence and in a spirit of helpfulness. Some in particular make it a hand maid of justice in a manner that saves to the world valuable lives and they deserve the commendation of the public for their efforts.

Just as a woman's path is harder than a man's so is the girl offender burdened with greater trial than her brother. She, too, has a past and when she goes out from the state's care she must face the same difficulties—intensified because of her sex. "Don't send me out until you have to," begged one wisp of a child—though she was nineteen—as I talked with her. "This is the only home I ever had and I don't know what I shall do when I go out." The state tries to establish her feet firmly on the ground of self-respect, with earning ability and education—but it ought to give more attention to caring for her before, while she had no home. Neglected children furnish the ultimate material for our penal institutions.

Only twelve Kansas women are in the penitentiary. It is a striking commentary on the relative behavior of the sexes that there are 166 girls and women and 1432 men and boys in custody. The penitentiary population includes almost every condition of race, culture, development, mental ability and physical attainment. Between the brutal degenerate and the well-educated, courteous inmate, perhaps a former community leader, is every phase of humanity. The prison must make its inmates obey, make them work, teach them their letters if they are ignorant, and if possible turn them out fit instead of misfit specimens. It is some job.

Two schools of prison management are forever arguing as to methods. One believes that the prisoner should be given every possible freedom of action, that he is merely a human animal morally sick and can be cured by kindness and confidence. The other makes discipline its keynote. It holds that the prisoner needs chiefly to learn that there are laws for the protection of society that must be obeyed and that the way to learn this is by obeying strict rules in the institution. The truth lies somewhere between the two extremes and the individual as a factor is always to be considered. Binet tests show a low measure of mental development. Children of ten to thirteen years they are, [*Continued on page 12*